

P O E M S

O N

Several Subjects :

Written by

STEPHEN DUCK,

Lately a poor *Thresher* in a Barn in the
County of *Wilts*, at the Wages of Four
Shillings and Six Pence *per Week* :

Which were publickly Read by

The Right Honourable the Earl of *Macclesfield*,
in the Drawing-Room at *Windsor-Castle*, on
Friday the 11th of *September*, 1730. to Her
MAJESTY :

Who was thereupon most graciously pleased to take
the Author into her Royal Protection, by allowing
him a Salary of Thirty Pounds *per Annum*, and
a small-House at *Richmond* in *Surrey*, to live in,
for the better Support of Himself and Family.

THE SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane*; and Sold by the Bookfellers of *London* and
Westminster. M.DCC.XXX.

(Price Six Pence.)

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1850

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T H E
S H U N A M I T E.

DEIGN, Heavenly Muses, to assist my
Song :
To Heavenly Muses Heavenly Themes
belong.
But chiefly Thou, O GOD, my Soul
inspire,

And touch my Lips with thy Celestial Fire :
If Thou delight'st in flow'ry *Carmel's* Shade,
Or *Jordan's* Stream, from thence I crave thy Aid :
Instruct my Tongue, and my low Accents raise,
'To sing thy Wonders, and display thy Praise ;
And make th' Inhabitants of *Judah's* Land
Give Ear, and *Israel* to my Voice attend.

Thus when the *Shunamite* had made her Prayer,
 The Crouds promiscuous throng'd around to hear
 Th' amazing Tale ; while thus her joyful Tongue,
 Mov'd by the Heavenly Power, began the Song.

Attend, ye Seed of *Abram*, and give ear,
 Whilst I *Jehovah's* Glorious Acts declare :
 From that great Source of Power what Wonders spring,
 If he assist my Lays, my *Muse* shall sing.
 My Lord and I, to whom all-bounteous Heaven
 His Blessings with no sparing Hand had given,
 Like faithful Stewards of our wealthy Store,
 Still lodg'd the Stranger, and reliev'd the Poor.
 And as *Elisba*, by divine Command,
 Came preaching Virtue to a sinful Land,
 He often deign'd to lodge within our Gate,
 And oft receiv'd an hospitable Treat ;
 A decent Chamber we for him prepar'd ;
 And he, the generous Labour to reward,
 Honours in Camp or Court to us propos'd,
 Which I refus'd, and thus my Mind disclos'd :
 Heaven's King hath plac'd us in a fertile Land,
 Where he showers down his Gifts with copious Hand ;
 Already we enjoy an affluent Store,
 Why should we be solicitous for more ?
 Give Martial Camps, and Kingly Courts to them
 Who place their only Bliss in fleeting Fame ;

There let them live in golden Chains of State,
 And be Unhappy, only to be Great.
 But let us in our Native Soil remain,
 Nor barter Happiness for sordid Gain.
 Here we may feed the Indigent in Peace,
 And cloath the Bare with the superfluous Fleece,
 And give the weary fainting Pilgrim Ease.
 This we prefer to Pomp, and formal Show,
 Which only serves to varnish o'er our Woe ;
 Refulgent Ornaments, which dress the Proud ;
 Objects of Wonder to the gazing Crowd ;
 Yet seldom give Content, or solid Rest
 To the vain Man by whom they are possess'd.

All Blessings, but a Child, had Heaven supply'd,
 And only that, the Almighty had deny'd ;
 Which, when made known to the Prophetic Seer,
 He said, and I before him did appear,
 And the first moment I approach'd the Room,
 He gravely rose, and did new Looks assume ;
 Not such a Wildness and fanatic Mien,
 With which, some say, the *Delphic* Priests are seen,
 When they for Mysteries of *Fate* explain
 The odd *Chimera's* of a frantic Brain ;
 But with a grave Majestic Air he stood,
 And more than Human in his Aspect glow'd :
 Celestial Grace sat on his radiant Look,
 And Power diffusive shone before he spoke.

Then

'Then Thus : Hail, generous Soul ! thy pious Cares
 Are not forgot, nor fruitless are thy Prayers ;
 Propitious Heav'n, thy virtuous Deeds to crown,
 Shall make thy barren Womb conceive a Son.
 So spake the Seer, and to complete my Joy,
 As he had said, I bore the promis'd Boy.
 Soon to my Friends the welcome News was known,
 Who crouded in a-pace to view my Son ;
 Surpriz'd, to hear my unexpected Bliss,
 And each rejoices for my Happiness.
 When all had said, I mov'd my joyful Tongue,
 And thus, to God, address'd my grateful Song.

O God ! What Eloquence can sing thy Praise ;
 Or who can fathom thy stupendous Ways ?
 All things obey at thy Divine Command,
 Thou mak'st a fruitful Field of barren Land :
 Th' obdurate Rock a fertile Glebe shall be,
 And bring forth copious Crops, if bid by Thee ;
 Arabia's Desert shall with Plenty smile,
 And fruitful Vines adorn th' uncultivated Soil.

As thus she spake, her Audience raise their Voice,
 And interrupt her Song, as they rejoice.
 O God ! we gladly hear thy mighty Power,
 And joyfully thy gracious Name adore :
 All Nature is subservient to thy Word,
 And shifts her wonted Course t'obey her Lord.

We

We, for thy **Servant's** Joy, our **Thanks** express;
 As grows the **Child**, so let her **Bliss** increase;
 And may thy **Delegate**, who did preside
 Over his **Native Hour**, his **Actions** guide!
 And, Ye **protecting Angels**, that do still
 Wait round the **Bless'd**, preserve him from all Ill;
 Inspire his **Soul** with **Virtue** whilst on **Earth**,
 And be his **watchful Guardians** until **Death**,
 Then safely bear——The **Dame** here wav'd her **Hand**,
 The **People** straight obey the **mute Command**:
 All silent stand, and all attentive look,
 Waiting her **Words**, while thus she **mournful spoke**.

All **Pleasures** are imperfect here below;
 And while we wait our growing **Happiness**,
 Some sudden **Grief** destroys the rising **Bliss**.
 E'er **Fourteen Years** were measur'd by my **Son**,
 (So soon, alas! the greatest **Blessing's** gone.)
 He in the **Harvest** to the **Reapers** goes,
 To view the bearded **Sheaves** erect in **Rows**;
 Like an embattled **Army** in the **Field**;
 (A new delightful **Prospect** to the **Child**!)
 But either there the scorching **Sun** display'd
 His **Heat** intense, and on his **Vitals** prey'd;
 Or sudden **Blast**, or **Apoplectic Pain**,
 With racking **Torture** seiz'd his tender **Brain**;
 His **Spirits** fail'd, he straight began to faint,
 And vainly to his **Father** made complaint.

The glowing Rose was quickly seen to fade;
At once, his Beauty and his Life decay'd.

Soon, at my House, the dismal News I heard;
Soon, at my House, the dying Child appear'd.
T'embrace him I with fond Affection run,
'And O! said I, what Pain afflicts my Son?
He try'd to speak; but fault'ring, gave a Groan:
No perfect Word proceeded from his Tongue,
But on his Life the broken Accents hung,

All means I us'd that might allay his Pain,
'And strove to give him Ease, but strove in vain:
Short, and more short he drew his rosy Breath,
'Too sure Presage of his approaching Death.
The Blood congeal'd, the heaving Heart beat low;
And his Head dropt with a declining Bow:
Thrice from my Breast to raise himself he try'd,
And thrice sunk down again, and groaning, dy'd.

Thus, when with Care we have nurs'd a beauteous
And taught the docile Branches where to twine: [Vine,
An eastern Gale, or some pernicious Frost,
Nips the young Tree, and all our Labour's lost.

With Horror chill'd, a-while aghast I stood
Viewing the Child, and trembling as I view'd:

My Eyes discharg'd their humid Store apace,
 And Tear succeeded Tear a-down my Face :
 Scarce my dilated Heart the Grief sustain'd ;
 At length, recovering Speech, I thus complain'd.

O fleeting Joys, inconstant as the Wind,
 That only for a Moment please the Mind,
 Then fly, and leave a Weight of Woe behind !
 But yet in vain I thus lament and mourn,
 The Soul once fled shall never more return ;
 And the fair Body now must be convey'd
 To Earth's dark Bosom, and eternal Shade.
 Yet let me not prescribe a Bound to Heaven,
 'Twas by a Miracle the Child was given ;
 Nor can I think the Wonder is more great,
 If the departed Soul resumes her Seat.
 What if I to *Mount Carmel* haste away,
 To him who did his mystick Birth display ?
 His powerful Word the Barren fruitful made ;
 His powerful Word, perhaps, may raise the Dead.
 The famous *Tisbite* rais'd a Widow's Son ;
Elisba has as wondrous Actions done.
 When he to *Jordan's* rapid Torrent came,
 He with the Mantle smote th' impetuous Stream ;
 Obsequious to the Stroke, the Waves divide,
 And raise a liquid Wall on either Side.

At *Jericho*, long had the barren Soil
 Deceiv'd the Husbandman, and mock'd his Toil;
 Yet at his Word it grew a fertile Field,
 And pois'nous Springs did wholesome Waters yield.

Nor can he only such great Blessings send,
 But Curses, if invoc'd, on him attend:
 Else how at *Bethel* call'd he Vengeance down,
 As a just Scourge on the opprobrious Town?

Again, when *Moab* Peace with *Israel* broke,
 And vainly strove to quit the servile Yoke;
 Our powerful Kings led forth th' embattled Host
 Thro' *Edom's* sultry Wilds and Air arid,
 Where the Confed'rate Troops no Water found;
 Dry were the Springs, and steril was the Ground:
 The Captains wanted Strength, and Courage fail'd,
 When Thirst and Foes at once the Host assail'd.
 The Kings to him their joint Petitions made,
 And fainting Soldiers crav'd his timely Aid;
 Nor crav'd in vain: The pow'rful Word he spake,
 And flowing Waters form'd a spacious Lake;
 The shining Streams advance their humid Train,
 And *Edom's* Wilds soon grow a liquid Plain.
 Not in more plenty did the Waters run
 Out of the Rock, when struck by *Amram's* Son.

And

(II)

And who can that amazing Act forget,
Which he perform'd to pay the Widow's Debt?
Whose quantity of Oil one Pot contain'd,
Yet num'rous Vessels fill'd before 'twas drain'd.
Then he who such stupendous Acts has done,
If God propitious prove, can raise my Son.
So saying, up I caught the Child with speed,
And laid it on the sacred Prophet's Bed;
Then call'd my Servant to prepare the Steed.
Pensive and sad, my mourning Husband said,
Fain would I from this Journey thee dissuade:
No God to-day the Prophet does inspire,
Nor can he aught reveal thou dost require.

To whom thus I:
Rather than sink, attempt my Hopes to raise,
Tell me no more of Ceremonial Days,
His God is present still, and hears him when he prays.

Thus said: Urging my Steed with eager haste,
Swift as the Mountain Roe, the Plains I past;
O'er Hills and Dales my Journey I pursu'd,
Nor slack'd my Pace till flow'ry *Carmel* view'd;
On whose delightful Brow, in cool Retreat
Among the curling Vines, the Prophet sat;
Whose twining Arms a beauteous Arbour made;
The beauteous Arbour form'd a grateful Shade:

The fanning *Zephyrs* gently play'd around,
 And shook the trembling Leaves, and swept the Ground.
 Down humbly at his Feet I prostrate fell;
 Submits, and, weeping, told the mournful Tale.

Calm and compose thy anxious Mind, said he,
 Tears can't revoke th' Almighty's fix'd Decree.
 We live and die, and both as he thinks fit ;
 He may command, but **Mortals** must submit.
 Death is a Debt we all to **Nature** owe,
 And not an Evil, but when counted so.
 Yet if of Heaven I can my Suit obtain,
 Thy Child shall live, and thou rejoice again.
 Thus said, with Looks divine his Staff he views,
 As if some powerful Charm he wou'd infuse ;
 Then calls his Servant hastily, and said,
 On the Child's Face see this discreetly laid.
 Th' obsequious Servant his Command obey'd.

O Thou, said I, on whom my Hope depends,
 Do not transfer this Work to Servants Hands !
 If thou thy self refuse with me to go,
 Here to the list'ning Vines I'll vent my Woe ;
 Still prostrate lie, lamenting for my Son,
 'Till every Hill prove vocal to my Moan.
 More had I said, but Grief the Words suppress'd ;
 Yet Sighs and silent Tears explain'd the rest.

At length he from his verdant Seat arose,
 And hastily adown the Mountain goes
 To *Shunem*; we with speed our way pursue,
 The City soon appears within our View;
 And the returning Servant at the Gate,
 Pensive and sad without Success, we met:
 The beauteous Child by Death still vanquish'd lay;
 Still Death insulted o'er the beauteous Prey:
 'Till to the House the sacred Seer was come,
 And with supernal Power approach'd the Room.

By the dead Child a-while he pensive stood,
 Then from the Chamber put the mourning Croud:
 That done, to God he made his ardent Prayer,
 And breath'd upon the Child with vital Air:
 And now the Soul resumes her pristine Seat,
 And now the Heart begins again to beat;
 A second Life diffuses o'er the Dead,
 And Death, repuls'd, inglorious doth recede.

Thus when a prowling Wolf hath stoln a Lamb,
 He sternly guards it from the bleating Dam;
 But if the Keeper comes, he quits his Prey,
 And, lowing, with reluctance makes away.

And now the Prophet to my longing Arms
 Resigns the Child, with more than wonted Charms;
 The blusky Rose shone fresher in his Face,
 And Beauty smil'd with a superiour Grace.

So when Heaven's Lamp that rules the genial Day,
 Behind the fable Moon pursues his way,
 Affrighted Mortals, when th' Eclipse is o'er,
 Believe him more illustrious than before.

Here ends the Dame, and the promiscuous Throng,
 With Hallelujahs thus conclude the Song :
 Righteous and Good art Thou, Lord God of Host,
 And all thy Works are wonderful and just ;
 Both Life and Death are in thy powerful Hand ;
 Both Life and Death obey thy great Command :
 By Thy great Power the Heavens and Earth are aw'd,
 Then let the Heavens and Earth adore their God.
 Thou glorious Sun, that measur'st all our Days,
 Rising and Setting, still advance his Praise.
 Thou Moon, and ye less glitt'ring Orbs that dance
 Round this Terrestrial Globe, his Praise advance :
 Ye liquid Seas, still waving to and fro,
 Praise when ye ebb, and praise him when ye flow :
 Ye wandring Rivers, and each purling Stream,
 As ye pursue your Course, his Praise proclaim ;
 Ye Dews, and Mists, and humid Vapours, all
 Praise when ye rise, and praise him when ye fall ;
 But chiefly *Israel*, who so oft do'st view
 His powerful Works, his daily Praise renew.

The **THRESHER'S LABOUR.**

THE grateful Tribute of these rural Lays,
Which to her Patron's Hand the Muse conveys,
Deign to accept: 'tis just She Tribute bring
To Him whose Bounty gives her Life to sing:
To Him whose generous Favours tune her Voice,
And bid her 'midst her Poverty rejoice.
Inspir'd by These, she dares her self prepare,
To sing the Toils of each revolving Year:
Those endless Toils, which always grow anew,
And the poor *Thresher's* destin'd to pursue;
Ev'n these with pleasure can the Muse rehearse,
When You, and Gratitude, command the Verse.

Soon as the Harvest hath laid bare the Plains,
And Barns well fill'd reward the Farmer's Pains;
What Corn each Sheaf will yield, intent to hear,
And guess from thence the Profits of the Year;
Or else impending Ruin to prevent,
By paying, timely, threat'ning Landlord's Rent,
He calls his *Threshers* forth: Around we stand,
With deep Attention waiting his Command.
To each our Tasks he readily divides,
And pointing, to our different Stations guides.

As he directs, to different Barns we go ;
 Here two for Wheat, and there for Barley two.
 But first, to shew what he expects to find,
 These Words, or Words like these, disclose his Mind :
 So dry the Corn was carried from the Field,
 So easily 'twill Thresh, so well 'twill Yield ;
 Sure large Day's Work I well may hope for now ;
 Come, strip, and try, let's see what you can do.
 Divested of our Cloaths, with Flatt in Hand,
 At a just Distance, Front to Front we stand ;
 And first the Threshall's gently swung, to prove,
 Whether with just Exactness it will move :
 That once secure, more quick we whirl them round,
 From the strong Planks our Crab-Tree Staves rebound,
 And echoing Barns return the rattling Sound.
 Now in the Air our knotty Weapons fly ;
 And now with equal Force descend from high :
 Down one, one up, so well they keep the Time,
 The Cyclops Hammers could not truer chime ;
 Nor with more heavy Strokes could *Ætna* groan,
 When *Vulcan* forg'd the Arms for *Thetis'* Son.
 In briny Streams our Sweat descends apace,
 Drops from our Locks, or trickles down our Face.
 No intermission in our Works we know ;
 The noisy Threshall must for ever go.
 Their Master absent, others safely play ;
 The sleeping Threshall doth it self betray.

Nor yet the tedious Labour to beguile,
 And make the passing Minutes sweetly smile.
 Can we, like Shepherds, tell a merry Tale?
 The Voice is lost, drown'd by the noisy Flail.
 But we may think—Alas! what pleasing thing
 Here to the Mind can the dull Fancy bring?
 The Eye beholds no pleasant Object here:
 No chearful Sound diverts the list'ning Ear.
 The Shepherd well may tune his Voice to sing,
 Inspir'd by all the Beauties of the Spring:
 No Fountains murmur here, no Lambkins play;
 No Linets warble, and no Fields look gay;
 'Tis all a dull and melancholy Scene,
 Fit only to provoke the Muses Spleen.
 When footy Pease we thresh, you scarce can know
 Our native Colour, as from Work we go;
 The Sweat, and Dust, and suffocating Smoke,
 Make us so much like *Ethiopians* look:
 We scare our Wives, when Evening brings us home;
 And frighted Infants think the Bug-bear come.
 Week after Week we this dull Task pursue,
 Unless when winnowing Days produce a new;
 A new indeed, but frequently a worse,
 The Threshall yields but to the Master's Curse:
 He counts the Bushels, counts how much a Day,
 Then swears we've idled half our Time away.
 Why look ye, Rogues! D'ye think that this will do?
 Your Neighbours thresh as much again as you.

Now in our Hands we with our noisy Tools,
 To drown the hated Names of Rogues and Fools;
 But wanting those, we just like School-boys look,
 When th' angry Master views the blotted Book:
 They cry their Ink was faulty, and their Pen;
 We, The Corn threshes bad, 'twas cut too green.
 But now the Winter hides his hoary Head,
 And Nature's Face is with new Beauty spread;
 The Spring appears, and kind Refreshing Showers
 New clothe the Field with Grass, and deck with Flowers.
 Next her, the ripening Summer presses on,
 And Sol begins his longest Stage to run:
 Before the Door our welcome Master stands,
 And tells us the ripe Grass requires our Hands.
 The long much-wish'd Intelligence imparts
 Life to our Looks, and Spirit to our Hearts;
 We wish the happy Season may be fair,
 And joyful, long to breathe in opener Air.
 This Change of Labour seems to give much Ease;
 With Thoughts of Happiness our Joy's complete,
 There's always Bitter mingled with the Sweet.
 When Morn does thro' the Eastern Windows peep,
 Strait from our Beds we start, and shake off Sleep;
 This new Employ with eager haste to prove,
 This new Employ becomes so much our Love:
 Alas! that human Joys shou'd change so soon,
 Even this may bear another Face at Noon!

The Birds salute us as to Work we go,
 And a new Life seems in our Breasts to glow.
 A-croſs one's Shoulder hangs a Scythe well ſteel'd,
 The Weapon deſtin'd to unclothe the Field:
 T'other ſupports the Whetſtone, Scrip, and Beer;
 That for our Scythes, and Theſe our ſelves to chear:
 And now the Field deſign'd our Strength to try
 Appears, and meets at laſt our longing Eye;
 The Graſs and Ground each chearfully ſurveys,
 Willing to ſee which way th' Advantage lays.
 As the beſt Man, each claims the foremoſt Place;
 And our firſt Work ſeems but a ſportive Race:
 With rapid Force our well-whet Blades we drive,
 Strain every Nerve, and Blow for Blow we give:
 Tho' but this Eminence the Foremoſt gains,
 Only t' excel the reſt in Toil and Pains.
 But when the ſcorching Sun is mounted high,
 And no kind Barns with friendly Shades are nigh,
 Our weary Scythes entangle in the Graſs,
 And Streams of Sweat run trickling down a-pace;
 Our ſportive Labour we too late lament,
 And wiſh that Strength again, we vainly ſpent:
 Thus in the Morn a Courſer I have ſeen,
 With headlong Fury ſcour the level Green,
 Or mount the Hills, if Hills are in his way,
 As if no Labour could his Fire allay,
 Till the meridian Sun with ſultry Heat,
 And piercing Beams hath bath'd his Sides in Sweat;

The lengthen'd Chace scarce able to sustain,
 He measures back the Hills and Dales with pain.
 With Heat and Labour tir'd, our Scythes we quit,
 Search out a shady Tree, and down we sit;
 From Scrip and Bottle hope new Strength to gain;
 But Scrip and Bottle too are try'd in vain.
 Down our parch'd Throats we scarce the Bread can get,
 And quite o'er-spent with Toil, but faintly eat;
 Nor can the Bottle only answer all,
 Alas! the Bottle and the Beer's too small.
 Our Time slides on, we move from off the Grass,
 And each again betakes him to his Place.
 Not eager now, as late, our Strength to prove,
 But all contented regular to move:
 Often we whet, as often view the Sun,
 To see how near his tedious Race is run;
 At length he veils his radiant Face from sight,
 And bids the weary Traveller good-night:
 Homewards we move, but so much spent with Toil,
 We walk but slow, and rest at every Stile.
 Our good expecting Wives, who think we stay,
 Got to the Door, soon eye us in the way;
 Then from the Pot the Dumpling's catch'd in haste,
 And homely by its side the Bacon's plac'd.
 Supper and Sleep by Morn new Strength supply,
 And out we set again our Works to try:
 But not so early quite, nor quite so fast,
 As to our Cost we did the Morning past.

Soon

Soon as the rising Sun hath drank the Dew,
 Another Scene is open'd to our View;
 Our Master comes, and at his Heels a Throng
 Of prattling Females, arm'd with Rake and Prong:
 Prepar'd, whil'ft he is here, to make his Hay;
 Or, if he turns his Back, prepar'd to play.
 But here, or gone, sure of this Comfort still,
 Here's Company, so they may chat their fill:
 And were their Hands as active as their Tongues,
 How nimbly then would move their Rakes and Prongs?
 The Grass again is spread upon the Ground,
 Till not a vacant Place is to be found;
 And while the piercing Sun-beams on it shine,
 The Haymakers have time allow'd to dine:
 That soon dispatch'd, they still sit on the Ground,
 And the brisk Chat renew'd, a-fresh goes round:
 All talk at once, but seeming all to fear,
 That all they speak so well, the rest won't hear;
 By quick degrees so high their Notes they strain,
 That Standers-by can naught distinguish plain:
 So loud their Speech, and so confus'd their Noise,
 Scarce puzzled Echo can return a Voice;
 Yet spite of this, they bravely all go on,
 Each scorns to be, or seem to be, outdone:
 Till (unobserv'd before) a low'ring Sky,
 Fraught with black Clouds, proclaims a Shower nigh;
 The tattling Croud can scarce their Garments gain,
 Before descends the thick impetuous Rain:

Their

Their noisy Prattle all at once is done,
And to the Hedge they all for Shelter run.

Thus have I seen on a bright Summer's Day,
On some green Brake a Flock of Sparrows play;
From Twig to Twig, from Bush to Bush they fly,
And with continu'd Chirping fill the Sky;
But on a sudden, if a Storm appears,
Their chirping Noise no longer dings your Ears;
They fly for Shelter to the thickest Bush,
There silent sit, and all at once is hush.
But better Fate succeeds this rainy Day,
And little Labour serves to make the Hay;
Fast as 'tis cut, so kindly shines the Sun,
Turn'd once or twice, the pleasing Work is done:
Next Day the Cocks appear in equal Rows,
Which the glad Master in safe Reeks bestows.

But now the Field we must no longer range,
And yet, hard Fate! still Work for Work we change.
Back to the Barns again in haste we're sent,
Where lately so much Time we pensive spent:
Not pensive now; we bless the friendly Shade,
And to avoid the parching Sun are glad.
But few Days here we're destin'd to remain,
Before our Master calls us forth again:
For Harvest now, says he, yourselves prepare,
The ripen'd Harvest now demands your Care.

Early next Morn I shall disturb your Rest;
Get all things ready, and be quickly dress.
Strict to his Word, scarce the next Dawn appears,
Before his hasty Summons fills our Ears.
Obedient to his Call, straight up we get,
And finding soon our Company complete;
With him, our Guide, we to the Wheat-Field go;
He, to appoint, and we, the Work to do.
Ye Reapers, cast your Eyes around the Field,
And view the Scene its different Beauties yield:
Then look again with a more tender Eye,
To think how soon it must in Ruin lie.
For once set in, where-e'er our Blows we deal,
There's no resisting of the well-whet Steel:
But here or there, where-e'er our Course we bend,
Sure Desolation does our Steps attend.
Thus, when *Arabia's* Sons, in hopes of Prey,
To some more fertile Country take their way;
How beauteous all things in the Morn appear,
There Villages, and pleasing Cots are here;
So many pleasing Objects meet the Sight,
The ravish'd Eye could willing gaze 'till Night:
But long e'er then, where-e'er their Troops have past,
Those pleasant Prospects lie a gloomy Waste.

The Morning past, we sweat beneath the Sun,
And but uneasily our Work goes on.

Before us we perplexing Thistles find,
 And Corn blown adverse with the ruffling Wind !
 Behind our Backs the Female Gleaners wait,
 Who sometimes stoop, and sometimes hold a Chat.
 Each Morn we early rise, go late to Bed,
 And lab'ring hard, a painful Life we lead :
 For Toils, scarce ever ceasing, press us now,
 Rest never does, but on the Sabbath show,
 And barely that, our Master will allow.
 Nor, when asleep, are we secure from Pain,
 We then perform our Labours o'er again :
 Our mimic Fancy always restless seems,
 And what we act awake, she acts in Dreams.
 Hard Fate ! Our Labours ev'n in Sleep don't cease,
 Scarce *Hercules* e'er felt such Toils as these.
 At length in Rows stands up the well-dry'd Corn,
 A grateful Scene, and ready for the Barn.
 Our well-pleas'd Master views the Sight with joy,
 And we for carrying all our Force employ.
 Confusion soon o'er all the Field appears,
 And stunning Clamours fill the Workmens Ears;
 The Bells, and clashing Whips, alternate sound,
 And rattling Waggons thunder o'er the Ground.
 The Wheat got in, the Pease, and other Grain,
 Share the same Fate, and soon leave bare the Plain :
 In noisy Triumph the last Load moves on,
 And loud Huzza's proclaim the Harvest done.

Our Master joyful at the welcome Sight,
 Invites us all to feast with him at Night.
 A Table plentifully spread we find,
 And Jugs of humming Beer to cheer the Mind ;
 Which he, too generous, pushes on so fast,
 We think no Toils to come, nor mind the past.
 But the next Morning soon reveals the Cheat,
 When the same Toils we must again repeat :
 To the same Barns again must back return,
 To labour there for room for next Year's Corn.

Thus, as the Year's revolving Course goes round,
 No respite from our Labour can be found :
 Like *Sisyphus*, our Work is never done,
 Continually rolls back the restless Stone :
 Now growing Labours still succeed the past,
 And growing always new, must always last.





On POVERTY.

THere is no Ill on Earth which Mortals fly
 With so much Dread, as abject Poverty.
 O despicable Name ! We Thee to shun,
 On every other Evil blindly run.
 For fear of Thee, distrustful Niggards go
 In tatter'd Rags, and starve their Bodies too ;
 And still are poor, for fear of being so.
 For fear of Thee, the Trader swears and vows
 His Wares are good, altho' his Conscience knows
 That he hath us'd his utmost Art and Skill,
 Their Faults and Imperfections to conceal.
 The Sailor terrify'd with Thoughts of Thee,
 Boldly attempts the Dangers of the Sea :
 From East to West, o'er Rocks and Quick-sands steers,
 'Tis Poverty, 'tis that alone he fears.
 The Soldier too, whom nought but Thee can scare,
 In hopes of Plunder, bravely meets the War :

To fly from Poverty, he runs on Death,
 And shews he prizes Riches more than Breath.
 Strange Terror of Mankind ! by Thee misled,
 Not Conscience, Quick-sands, Rocks, or Death, they
 And yet thou art no formidable Foe, [dread :
 Except to little Souls, who think Thee so.
 'Tis only the Imagination, that
 The blunted Edge of Poverty can whet.
 'Tis servile Fear that does affright us most ;
 'Tis that transforms a Shadow to a Ghost.
 Thus when a tim'rous Man, in Fears grown old,
 Reminds the Fairy Tales his Nurse has told ;
 In the dark Night he oft will sideways squint,
 And sees a Goblin, when there's nothing in't.

Contented Poverty's no dismal Thing,
 Free from the Cares unwieldy Riches bring :
 At distance both alike deceive our View,
 Nearer approach'd, they take another Hue.
 The poor Man's Labour relishes his Meat ;
 His Morsel's pleasant, and his Rest is sweet.
 The Little, Nature craves, we find with ease ;
 Too much but surfeits into a Disease :
 And what we have, more than we can enjoy,
 Instead of satisfying, does but cloy.

But should we in another Prospect take it ;
 Was Poverty so hideous as they make it ;

That steady Man is worthy of our Praise,
 Who in Distress, or pinch'd with Hunger, says,
 Let Poverty, or Want, be what it will,
 It does proceed from God, therefore's no Ill.
 How does his great heroic Soul aspire
 Above that sordid Wealth the rest admire !
 His noble Thoughts are fix'd on Things above,
 Where by true Faith, he sees the God of Love
 Hold forth th' attractive Prize, which makes him run
 His mortal Race, to gain th' immortal Crown.
 Not all the Snares a crafty Dev'l can lay,
 Can intercept, or stop him in his Way;
 His God-like Soul pursues the Thing that's good,
 And soars above the common Multitude.

Not all the scornful Insults of the Proud,
 Nor Censures of the base and groveling Croud :
 Not Poverty, in all her Terrors drest,
 Can shake the solid Quiet of his Breast.
 Unmov'd he stands, against his worst of Foes,
 And mocks the Darts which adverse Fortune throws ;
 Calm and compos'd amidst or Ease or Pain,
 Enjoys that true Content, which others seek in vain.

So stands a fixed Rock, lofty and steep,
 Within the Confines of the briny Deep :
 Lash'd by the foaming Surges on each Side,
 Yet can't be shaken by th' indignant Tide.

Then

Then why should Fantoms discompose the Mind,
Or Woes, so far from real, fright Mankind ?
Since Wealth is but imaginary Fame,
Since Poverty is nothing but a Name ;
Since both from God's unerring Hand are sent,
Lord, give me neither, give me but Content.





HONOUR'D SIR,

I HAVE before the Time prescrib'd by you,
 Expos'd my weak Productions to your View.
 'T had been unjust so long to make you wait,
 For what at last had scarce been worth your sight :
 And only hopes for Pardon at your Hand,
 Because produc'd to Light by your Command.
 Haply you might expect some finish'd Ode,
 Or sacred Song, made to the Praise of God.
 A glorious Thought, and laudable ! O then
 Think on th' illiterate Soul that guides the Pen ;
 Ill suit such Tasks with one that holds the Plow,
 Such lofty Subjects with a Fate so low.

Alas ! Great SIR, was but your Learning mine ;
 And I, like you, a Fav'rite of the Nine ;
 Sacred *Parnassus*' Top I soon would climb,
 And find a Hero worthy of my Rhyme.
 My well-chose Subject then I'd treat with Sense,
 And grace each Line with Art and Eloquence.

I would not sing of *Troy*, or ancient *Greece* ;
 Of sage *Ulysses*, or of *Priam's* Race ;
 Or any of these fictitious Sons of Fame ;
 Pagans, unworthy of a Christian's Theme.
 Much nobler Thoughts my grateful Voice shou'd raise,
 In lofty Strains, to Great *Messiah's* Praise :
 With Joy I'd sing of his stupendous Birth,
 And paint his god-like Virtues whil'st on Earth :
 Then with reluctance, horror, and surprize,
 I'd mournfully recite his Agonies ;
 I'd trace the heavenly Hero to the Tree,
 And shew how God in Man expir'd for me.
 Next in Heroic Numbers would I tell,
 How the third Day he rose, and vanquish'd Hell ;
 Subdu'd the Grave, and Death victoriously,
 And gave us Earnest of Eternity.
 Such noble Subjects shou'd my Lays excite ;
 And You, Great Patron, wou'd in such delight :
 Grateful to me, when you well pleas'd shou'd view
 Th' accomplish'd sacred Piece inscrib'd to you.

But in *Messiah's* Cause I can't proceed,
 Lest when I strive to praise him, I degrade.
 My Fate, unkind, compels me to be mute,
 Because of Learning I am destitute ;
 By which no Thought, tho' well conceiv'd, can rise
 To full Perfection, but in *Embryo* dies.

Yet

Yet my unpolish'd Soul wou'd fain produce,
And bring forth something, tho' 'tis of no use!

Thus in the Country often have I found,
(Thro' slothful Man's neglect) a Plat of Ground
Waste and uncultivated, void of Seeds.

But why stand I my Fate accusing so?
The Field calls me to Labour, I must go.
The Cow lows after Meat; the hungry Steed,
Neighing, complains he wants his usual Feed.
Then, SIR, adieu! Accept what you did crave,
And be propitious to your humble Slave:

STEPHEN DUCK

Ann. Aet. 25.

F I N I S



